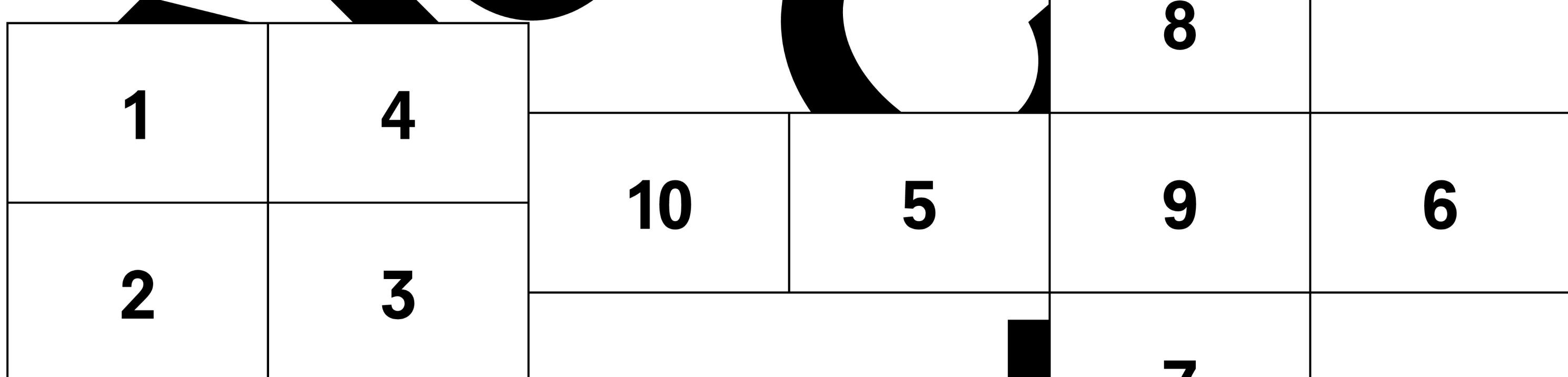


# The A Newspaper Of Public Space

# new city

FOR WALL ASSEMBLY...



# Reader

The New City Reader is a tactical newspaper on architecture, public space and the city. Conceived by executive editors Joseph Grima and Kazys Varnelis, the newspaper's content centers on the spatial implications of epochal shifts in technology, economy and society today. The New City Reader has previously been published at the New Museum's Last Newspaper Show (2010) and the Istanbul Design Biennial (2012).

<http://newcityreader.net/>

#### The New City Reader

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NOVEMBER 2014 – JUNE 2015

**The Network  
Architecture  
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INSIDE!



**The Fast-Dealing  
Game of  
Inequality**

H K  
O O  
N N  
G G

**The  
New  
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Reader**

**UNEVEN  
GROWTH:  
TACTICAL  
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FOR  
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**THE MUSEUM  
OF MODERN  
ART,  
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**THE MAK—  
AUSTRIAN  
MUSEUM OF  
APPLIED ARTS  
/ CONTEMPO-  
RARY ART,  
VIENNA**

A Newspaper Of  
Public Space

# Uneven growth can only be solved through politics but politics is broken, in the hands of poll-driven politicians and screaming extremists.

**The New City Reader aims to fight this condition by calling upon us to slow down, stop looking at our devices, stop screaming at each other, and instead read together and discuss matters civilly in public again. It is a tactical intervention in the city that anyone can do.**

## Open Source Instructions: how to make your own New City Reader

1. Identify a city.
2. Identify the newspaper most crucial to that city. What is its format (such as tabloid or broadsheet) or type (a free weekly paper on cultural events, a free newspaper devoted to classifieds for sex workers, government newspaper, a newspaper that exists for purely legal purposes such as to announce marriages, name changes, and the formation of corporations?)? Examine the format of the newspaper and identify a strategy by which it could be appropriated for hanging throughout the city. How will language work? Can your paper be published in English? If not, how will you reach out beyond your local milieu? Decide how the paper will appear on the Web.
3. Secure funding. Anticipate that you will fall short. That's what your own pocket is for. Secure sites for hanging the paper. Closely examine local laws that might impact its public display, and most importantly see if organized crime controls the display of posted materials in your city. Find an editorial staff, a press, and individuals willing to post the paper in public using wheat-paste (otherwise known as "Marxist Glue").
4. Decide how your paper will be published. Should it be composed of a series of sections (e.g. politics, sports, weather, culture?) or should it come out weekly? Assign editors for individual sections or issues. Develop a repeatable workflow by which issue editors will propose their topic to you, solicit articles from contributors, and pass these to your editorial team for editing and layout. This is a newspaper. Deadlines matter. Everything will be last minute and endlessly in crisis.
5. Launch.



# How can we solve the problem of uneven growth?

by Kazys Varnelis

The Umbrella Revolution's first goal is a directly representative democracy, but it also expresses deep concern about uneven growth and the doubts citizens have that Hong Kong's government will adequately address that problem.

Hong Kong is a city of extremes. While the International Monetary Fund lists Hong Kong as having the seventh highest per capita income in the world, the city also has the highest income inequality of any developed city in the world, even before considering the habit of wealthy families in China to understate their incomes. Although immigration to Hong Kong has become virtually impossible, migrant workers come to Hong Kong on visas with specific expiry dates, severely limited rights, and no opportunity to settle. These workers form a permanent underclass of temporary non-citizens, whose lack of rights is underscored and exacerbated by income disparity. Hong Kong now has one of the world's lowest birth rates. But the greying of Hong Kong doesn't mean that the city is growing less unequal. On the contrary, the elderly face a precarious existence, and if they are lucky enough to have younger family members, the latter will be financially crushed by the burden of taking care of them. Add growing danger from climate events due to global warming and Hong Kong is a post-apocalypse in the making. But Hong Kong is only a model city, a few years ahead of the game due to extreme growth. All of us face this future, if we can make it that far.

Whether in Hong Kong, New York, or just about anywhere, every day we are reminded of the challenges posed by uneven growth and rising inequality. Real estate prices in global cities are rising stratospherically, even as other cities are shrinking and being economically gutted: this year Detroit has already shut off water to over 27,000 poor residents who have fallen behind on their bills. In the megacities that this show focuses on, wealth and poverty coexist. As apartments costing tens of millions become normal, the middle class finds itself rapidly joining the poor, working short term jobs

with no benefits, trading savings for debt, hoping not to get sick or disabled. When we are lucky enough to have jobs, we pretend that a lack of job security makes our lives more fun, that moonlighting keeps us fresh, that eighty-hour work weeks show how much we love what we do, that we love tiny spaces, that we are most at home in hotel rooms or jet planes, and that our bodies aren't destroyed by this existence.

How can we solve the problem of uneven growth? Not by neoliberalism, with handouts from NGOs or Kickstarter-style funding, but through politics. If political systems worldwide appear thoroughly broken, political change—as the Umbrella Revolution reminds us—is the one hope we have left, futile though it may be.

As a tactical intervention, the New City Reader begins with a simple premise: we observe that one of the challenges to political action today is the atomization of the public and our resultant inability to talk to each other about politics except by clicking a thumbs up or thumbs down button, political discourse becoming a matter of rants. If the Umbrella Revolution calls for change, we also call for dialogue between people in the streets, or the galleries, about change. What if we take a newspaper and, in the manner of the Chinese *Dàzìbào*, put it up on a wall to be read? We were asked to make something for museums in New York and Vienna, but why not take this idea and bring it elsewhere? Why not cover Hong Kong with *Dàzìbào*? The original *Dàzìbào* were made by hand and even large format plotter prints don't cost a lot of money. Don't just read the paper, make one of your own! What if we read it, what if we cover the archipelago of global cities in newsprint?

Along with a set of articles looking at Hong Kong today and in the future, we've included SYMTACTICS, a free board game in which you fight uneven growth through tactical urbanism. Much as building a model of a building allow us to see it more clearly, a game can reveal the particulars of a situation. Just as the New City Reader is intended to provoke discussion, a board game to be played with family and friends inevitably provokes conversation. If we can start a discussion we have hope for change.

# L U F S I G

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姆  
西



by Kazys Varnelis

In December 2013, all three IKEA stores in Hong Kong and eleven of the fourteen IKEA stores in mainland China sold out of a stuffed wolf named Lufsig. The character is based on children's book illustrator Silke Leffler's interpretation of the Big Bad Wolf from Little Red Riding Hood. Lufsig wears a checked shirt, jeans, and suspenders; he also has a hole in his belly, technically a "cannula," allowing children to insert and remove a second stuffed figure, that of Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother. Although part of the profits from Lufsig benefited UNICEF and Save the Children and the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* was originally collected in *Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals, Tales of Mother Goose*, a set of stories published in 1697 by Charles Perrault, the run on Lufsig had little to do with either philanthropy or antiquarianism. Rather, Lufsig became a hit when on December 7, 2013, he was thrown by a protestor at the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Leung Chun-ying. In doing so, Lufsig set out a chain reaction of tactical mistranslation.

The wolf-toss protest originates in Lufsig's name, which, rather oddly, but perhaps in typical IKEA fashion, is derived from the Swedish word *lufsa*, "to lumber," but transliterated into Cantonese, winds up sounding like an obscene reference to one's mother's genitalia. Compounding matters, Leung's critics had already nick-named him "the wolf" as a play on his own name (which sounds similar to the Cantonese word for wolf) along with his wily nature. Moreover, the Cantonese translation for "throw your lufsig" sounds like an obscene phrase suggesting copulation with one's mother.

The run on Lufsigs that took place the next morning at the three

Hong Kong IKEAs was thus a vote of solidarity with the protest against Leung. Placing a Lufsig in the window of one's apartment or next to the cash register of one's store became a way of registering dissent while also alluding to the humor of the situation. An online video game roughly based on Pac-Man and titled "C.Y. & Lufsig" followed within a week, drawing hundreds of thousands of hits. Unable to crack down on the rampant Lufsigs, Leung posted a photo of himself with the wolf on his official blog above the caption "Hong Kong people's creativity has no limits." If Leung had temporarily tactically disarmed his opponents, he nevertheless continued to maintain his hardline position against full democratic representation, arguing that if it were allowed, it would lead "poorer people [to] dominate [the] Hong Kong vote." According to Leung, the "business community... a very small group of elites in Hong Kong ... control the destiny of the economy in Hong Kong. If we ignore their interests, Hong Kong capitalism will stop ..." Protesters responded during the early days of the Umbrella Revolution by using the hashtag #hk689 on Instagram to refer to the 689 of 1,200 votes that Leung received in the 2012 election for chief executive.

The sort of play with mistranslation involved with Lufsig dates back to British colonial days, if not further. Starting with the Ordnance Survey of Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century, the British government used mapping and the Anglicization of place names as an expansionary tool, appropriating existing names into a broader imperial framework. In the course of their surveys, the British turned to members of the local population for their knowledge of the geography. The Hong Kong locals, rightly wary of the British, decided to skewer their new masters with humor by littering the local geography with names that sounded meaningless in English but were deeply offensive in Cantonese, thus making the ignorant British who would use such names become a laughing stock.

**In December 2013, all three IKEA stores in Hong Kong and eleven of the fourteen IKEA stores in mainland China sold out of a stuffed wolf named Lufsig.**

The history of Lufsig and Hong Kong place names points to the powerful and disabling quality of humor in tactical political actions. In his *Critique of Cynical Reason*, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk opposes two kinds of personas, the cynic and the kynic. The cynic is a tragic but supremely dangerous persona who knows that what she or he does is wrong but does it anyway (academia and the museum, it should be added, are the natural home of the cynic) while the kynic, embodied by the philosopher Diogenes, is deliberately outrageous, employing bodily, even scatological references to point out the absurdity of a situation. Humor, in the kynic's hands, becomes the most dangerous weapon as it shows the preposterousness of the system we have created.

Nor is it an accident that Lufsig is a child's toy. Children are born kynics; it is only with time, when we teach them the inappropriateness of laughter at potty talk, that they lose their ability to upset our world. Lufsig teaches us the necessity of the kynic's laughter once again, in the context of tactical urbanism.

# “YOU HAVE WON A PRIZE IN BEAUTY IN A CONTEST”

by Robert Sumrell and Kazys Varnelis

Nothing has taught people more about uneven growth than the board game Monopoly. Since its first publication by Parker Brothers in 1934, more than a billion people have played Monopoly and more than 275 million copies have been sold. Although Monopoly's iconic setting is Atlantic City, New Jersey, the game has been published in at least 111 countries and 43 languages while being customized for countless cities, companies, schools, the military, and even multiple zombie-ridden post-apocalypses. Every city in the Uneven Growth show has been depicted on Monopoly game boards. Hong Kong received its first official edition in 1965, and the official New York City Collector's Edition includes MoMA among the purchasable properties.

Monopoly seems, at first glance, to be the product of can-do American optimism. In notes accompanying the game, Parker Brothers describes it as an example of individual ingenuity and hope in the darkest period of the Great Depression. According to the company, Monopoly's inventor Charles Darrow, a salesman by profession, was “unemployed at the time and often played this game to amuse himself and pass the time. It was the game's exciting promise of fame and fortune that initially prompted Darrow to produce this game on his own.”

# Monopoly™ and Uneven Growth

But Darrow's version was a takeoff of an earlier game with a different intent, Elizabeth Magie's 1904 “Landlord's Game.” Inspired by the early Progressive activist Henry George's call for a “single tax on land system” to abolish all taxes save those on property, Magie developed the game to encourage disillusionment with the disproportionate wealth accrued by landlords, writing “Let the children once see clearly the gross injustice of our present land system and when they grow up, if they are allowed to develop naturally, the evil will soon be remedied.” Unlike the later Monopoly, however, Magie also included a second set of rules entitled “Prosperity.” Under Prosperity rules, rent on land would be paid not to players but to the public treasury, thus inhibiting the accumulation of unearned wealth. Play would continue until all players had doubled their original capital. Magie patented both versions of the game and published it, attracting a small following among Georgists, Quakers, university faculty and college students. In the 1920s, convinced she had created a sellable product and seeking a broader audience, Magie approached Parker Brothers about publishing the Landlord's Game, but the company declined, declaring it too political.

Even so, the game continued to circulate through word of mouth and gained devoted players who modified the game as they copied it and removed Magie's political lessons from the game. Eventually a handmade copy made its way east to Atlantic City where a group of Quakers revised the rules and renamed the board spaces to fit the city around them. Encountering the game while travelling, New Jersey hotel manager and renovator Charles Todd brought it to Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia, where he shared the game with Charles Darrow. Thinking that the game could be marketable, Darrow manufactured and sold the game under the name “Monopoly” at Wanamaker's Department Store in Philadelphia and the F. A. O. Schwarz toy store in New York. Finally seeing the appeal of the game, Parker Brothers bought Monopoly and, to guard against lawsuits or rivals, purchased Magie's patent as well. In doing so, however, Parker Brothers attributed the game solely to Darrow and, where Darrow would be paid royalties for every game sold and thus became the first millionaire game designer, Magie was paid a mere \$500.

Monopoly became a runaway hit. With both the age of robber barons and the political outcry for a single tax having ended, Monopoly delivered the promise that, if uneven distribution of wealth was the rule, winning was conceivably within our grasp. After all, in every game of Monopoly someone in the family or group of friends playing walks away the winner. Monopoly offers uneven growth as a beacon of hope, fostering the perverse idea that if uneven growth is real, there's nothing more fun than playing its game. In this it plays the same role that the media's hero worship of billionaires like Donald Trump, Warren Buffett, or the late Steve Jobs does: it suggests that it's natural for the lucky and talented to be big winners, covering up the fact that its the rules of the game (or in this case, the economy) that determine uneven growth.

by Joseph Grima

While the rest of the world avidly watched the struggle for democracy in Hong Kong this fall, newspapers in the People's Republic of China (PRC) initially ignored the protests. Only when their duration and size, and leakage of news of the Umbrella Revolution through the Great Firewall of China made that strategy untenable, did China acknowledge it, blaming foreign influences. The *People's Daily*, the flagship newspaper of the Communist Party, inverted the protesters' call for democracy claiming, "respecting the will and interests of the majority is the common essence of all democracies." The gaping void left by the absence of real journalism in China might suggest the lack of any force capable of counteracting the ruling Communist Party; while this is largely the case, it is also true that Chinese society has produced a diverse and fascinating array of instruments of subversion, propaganda and resistance.

It can be tempting to assume that no space of collective protest existed prior to the Web's relatively widespread diffusion in China and that is the primary space of dissent there. Given the Internet's role today as the prime organizational locus of political resistance in China, it is true that Beijing is notoriously and understandably paranoid when it comes to online dissent; microblogging site Weibo returns error messages for searches on terms like "Umbrella Revolution." In turn, fearful that the PRC will block communications in the city, the protesters in Hong Kong have turned to Firechat, a mesh network application that allows them to communicate even if cellular service winds up disrupted. If over the last decade the persecution of bloggers by the Chinese government—perhaps most prominently, architect/artist Ai Weiwei—has attracted widespread international indignation, less well known is the fact that activism of the kind exercised by agitators such as Ai or the Umbrella Revolution has precise historical antecedents in Chinese culture. Furthermore, these antecedents allow unusually precise analogs to be drawn between the collective perception of the Internet and public space in the city, at least in terms of their potential as forums for the expression of both citizenship and political defiance.

One such antecedent is the dàzibào (literally "big character poster"): a handwritten, usually anonymous poster bearing large sized Chinese characters, prominently pasted in public space since imperial times as a means of protest, propaganda, dissent and denunciation. As literacy rates rose after the 1911 revolution, the dàzibào grew in popularity to become the grassroots weapon of choice for exposing and chastening corrupt local officials; in a society so strongly marked by a sense of collective identity, shame was a powerful weapon.

A key trigger in the Cultural Revolution was the publication of a dàzibào on May 25, 1966, by Nie Yuanzi and others at Beijing University that claimed the university was controlled by "bourgeois anti-revolutionaries." The poster came to the attention of Mao Zedong, who had its contents broadcast nationally and published in the *People's Daily*.

# The Spatial Practice of Democracy

Big-character posters were soon ubiquitous and became organs for everything from sophisticated debate to satirical entertainment to rabid denunciation.

The dàzibào's role as a forceful mechanism of influence on popular opinion was underscored throughout the years of the Cultural Revolution. Mao Zedong subsequently incited China's teenagers to revolt against his enemies in the Communist Party through a mass posting of dàzibào denouncing the "capitalist roaders." Mao's infatuation with the dàzibào as an instrument of mass persuasion was such that he even had the constitution amended in 1966 to legitimize their posting—possibly the last time what amounted to uncensored publishing was formally authorized until the arrival of the Internet made total control impracticable.

Little more than a decade later, in the winter of 1978, a 200 yard brick wall to the west of Tiananmen Square became the location for a new wave of dàzibào criticizing many aspects of Chinese life, including Mao and his political legacy. In *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*, John Downing writes,

It quickly became known as the Democracy Wall and attracted many readers as well as open-air public discussions and speeches. Some of the dàzibào were very long, consisting of numerous sheets, equivalent to a very lengthy journal article or even a small book...One very popular dàzibào, however, was extremely short, a poem consisting of a single character for the word Net, which condensed into this one image the sense of being hemmed in at all points and the frustration deeply felt by young Chinese in particular.

**Big-character posters were soon ubiquitous and became organs for everything from sophisticated debate to satirical entertainment to rabid denunciation.**

Sensing the danger of surrendering total dominance of public space during the Cultural Revolution to homespun dàzibào, state-sanctioned newspapers made increasingly frequent appearances on walls, in squares and on bulletin boards in dàzibào-like configurations. It is a custom that still endures and that implies a very different conception of the newspaper from the model the West has come to take for granted. Not least, it implies a radically different financial model: a newspaper primarily intended not to be bought but to be affixed publicly and read collectively can be understood as a public service—or a form of propaganda, depending on one's point of view.

In this context, the debate around the disappearance of the newspaper takes on very different implications. If, from our perspective, what is at stake in the debate on the newspaper's future is the survival of a vital organ of democracy and therefore the future of political freedom itself, the contrary could be said to be true in China. In recent history, newspapers—whether hung in public or read individually—have been tightly controlled mechanisms engaged in the propagation of an official narrative, which few even within China would mistake for faithful journalism or impartial criticism. While this is not yet the case in Hong Kong, events like the knife attack on former *Ming Pao* editor Kevin Lau, known for his paper's investigative reporting into offshore assets of wealthy Hong Kong and Chinese nationals in February, have raised suspicions about PRC influence on the Hong Kong press. In the PRC, the media are the domain of the Party; spaces of collectivity and participation are the primary, or perhaps only, spaces of dissent.

These spaces need not necessarily be physical. The persecution of activists such as Liu Xiaobo and Ai Wei Wei—and Google's temporary withdrawal from China over censorship-related disputes—has led to the perception in the West that every aspect of online life in China is uncompromisingly policed. The reality, however, is that the government is unable or perhaps uninterested in trying to control everything. The online version of the dàzibào—the renrou sousuo yinqing (literally "human flesh search engine")—is among these states of exemption from control. In his *New York Times* article of March 3, 2010, Tom Downey describes the phenomenon:

They are a form of online vigilante justice in which Internet users hunt down and punish people who have attracted their wrath. The goal is to get the targets of a search fired from their jobs, shamed in front of their neighbors, run out of town... The popular meaning is now not just a search by humans but also a search for humans, initially performed online but intended to cause real-world consequences...Human flesh searches highlight what people are willing to fight for: the political issues, polarizing events and contested moral standards that are the fault lines of contemporary China.

The searches occur not on a specific site but across many bulletin boards, and are powered by wang min—self-declared Internet citizens, or Netizens. "The word 'Netizen' exists in English," Downey points out. "But you hear its equivalent used much more frequently in China, perhaps because the public space of the Internet is one of the few places where people can in fact act like citizens."

It has been suggested that informal mechanisms of denunciation such as the human flesh search engine are not only tolerated but also encouraged by the Chinese government. In a country like China, geographically vast yet with an intensely centralized public structure, control over peripheral regions can be difficult to exert, and exasperation over the corruption of low-level officials can be a source of political instability. It is one of the paradoxes of contemporary China that by tolerating a degree of unfettered criticism online, the Party relies to no small extent on its own citizens to police its members with the aim of perpetuating its power.

The twentieth century history of the dàzibào—a form of individual political participation that finds its expression in the streets and squares of the city—is also a history of struggle over the public sphere and for free speech in China. In the West, meanwhile, an obsessive pursuit of safety and control that is parcel of the post 9/11 condition has led to the almost complete obliteration of liberty and individual agency in public space. While the absence of true journalism in the People's Republic of China is lamentable, we should remember that if the newspaper is well on its way out anyway, at least the Chinese will be left with a long-ingrained sense of visceral attachment to public space in the city. We might not be so lucky.



The dàzibào by Nie Yuanzi at Beijing in May 1966 that helped spark the cultural revolution



photo by Gaia Cambiaggi

# HONG KONG LAND

by MAP Office



## THE ISLAND OF LAND

The Island of Land is a mobile territory on the quest to create a new region. As an in-between territory, both ephemeral and permanent, it is a land of empty shells shining in the sun. A traditional oyster-farming village, Lau Fau Shan has stretched its limits into Deep Bay over the 20th century, slowly reducing the gap between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Escaping the urban zone of the New Territories, children have made this island a new playground. They have transformed tools into toys and routine into amusing ritual. By throwing oyster shells into the water, they have gradually built new land while playing. A landscape of delinquency where the humidity reaches the climax of mugginess, this new territory stands alone in its tentative political and geographical response to the liquid border separating Hong Kong from Mainland China.



## THE ISLAND OF THE SEA

Water is an essential source of life, and access to it is a basic human right. The Island of Sea is a living organism with the desire to merge an aqua-structure

with a fishing community. Made of layered vernacular architecture, the floating village has an organization that is directly inspired by the condition of its liquid environment. Here the economy of survival is found in water. The sea replaces the land in order to feed the resident community. Each house integrates water in numerous ways. Ready to be relocated and deployed, the island's aquaculture offers the possibility of creating a new economy and new means of food production. Located directly under the house or at its sides, seaweed and fish form the fields that the polluted land has lost. In this sense, The Island of Sea proposes a new sustainable way of life for an ecologically precarious future.



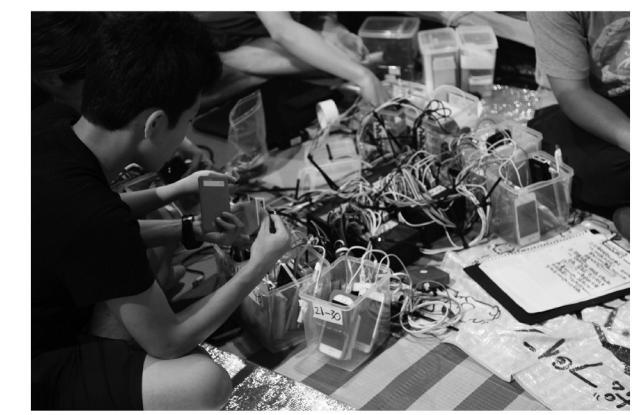
where illegal consumption is authorized. With its tanks shaped in the form of buildings, the island is made up of an infinite network of pipes, wires and gutters that serve as the main organs feeding an intoxicated population. Dark and wet, the island's labyrinth offers a hidden feast of drugs, adventure and sex. Here, passengers can experience a disconnected moment of time as the ship epitomizes the pleasure of being at the mercy of the sea. The island is also a stage for a youth-driven bacchanalia of excess.



resources, the island is a key element in assisting and comforting zones in the throes of emergency. Inspired by the form of a trading floor, it is a geometric organic structure characterized by a multifaceted complexity in the relationship between its inside and outside, its surfaces and volumes. At the island's center is a crater, a compact place sheltering the most precious resources, defending its coveted treasure like a giant safe. Located in the heart of Victoria Harbour, the floating island establishes a new form of trade in commodities and goods of all kinds to contribute to a new global economy of emergency.



the hope for a possible recovery and reconstruction. Each island stages man-made nature in a perfect setting in which humans and animals live harmoniously in perfect self-sufficiency. Each island is self-sufficient, a miniature version of a perfect environment. Being located reasonably far from one another, they do not create any sense of neighbourhood or community. The most fascinating aspect of this voluntary isolation—not quarantine—is that it transforms an idyllic landscape into a theatre of permanent anxiety. To contain potential contamination by threat or conflict—such as a virus or other form of attack—each island takes the form of an independent platform; the only thing all of them share is the sky above. The islands are antechambers of anticipation: places of fear in which to wait for something, somewhere that is about to happen. Here time is what offers stability, most of all through the offer of an escape from the anxiety and uncertainty of the things to come.



**THE ISLAND OF SURPLUS**  
The Island of Surplus in Junk Bay is an unstable archipelago made up of a complex accumulation and compression of various types of waste material. Bits

of trash collide in an entropically generated landscape, creating an archipelago that can be experienced from multiple points of view. Abandoned detritus built up over years of accretion resembles the prehistoric vestiges of an ignorant civilization. Yet the Island of Surplus is also one of the most visited ones in Victoria Harbour, with its unique silhouettes recalling Ha Long Bay. Its formerly booming business of recycling waste materials was once handled by hundreds of boats, but now there is only work enough for a few families. Appropriating the trash island, they transform it into a fantastic laboratory for the manipulation of geology and geography. While the island's grid structure supports these ephemeral constructions, the process of the accumulation of waste opens up unlimited possibilities. Metal, plastic and paper are arranged with the same compact rationale and are constantly relocated to the top of the island through the use of a single rotating crane. Trapping humidity and dirt, this new sediment quickly becomes a fertile terrain for various species of moss and plants, thereby proposing a new ecology of hope and life in a once heavily polluted territory.

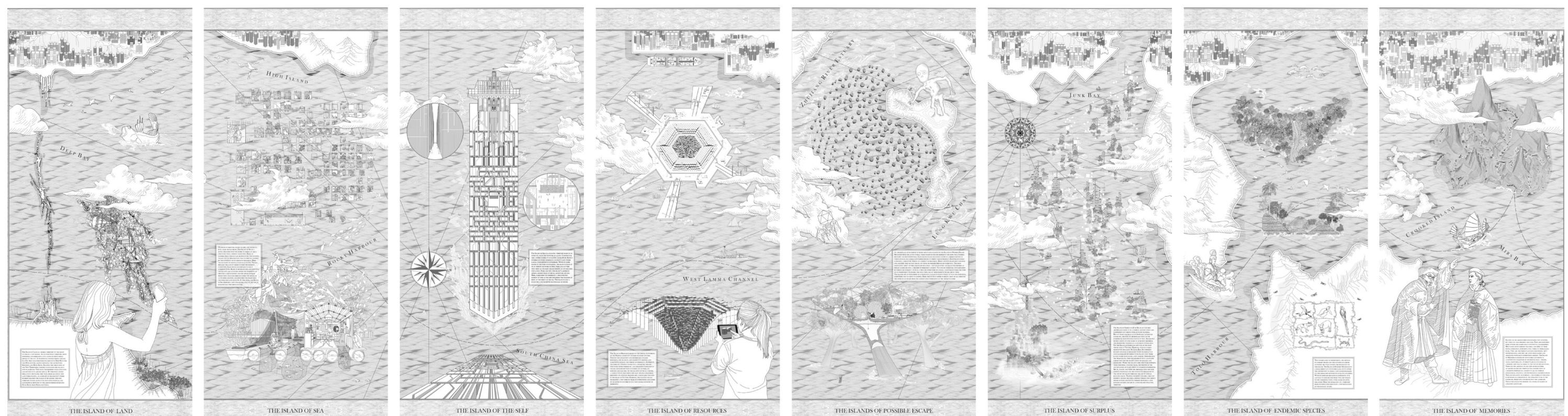


**THE ISLAND OF ENDEMIC SPECIES**  
The conservation of biodiversity, the defence of endemic species, and the control of leisure activities are what govern the protection of this island. The Island of

Endemic Species is just a small ribbon of untouched land, yet it offers the opportunity to build a new ecosystem based on the migratory movements of plants and birds. With its limitless biodiversity, it is a jungle to explore for those who are willing to try coexisting with a wide range of living organisms. Here the separation of a territory from its population results in a new regulation of the ecology of life.



**THE ISLAND OF MEMORIES**  
Islands can be laboratories for building new societies, but they can also preserve old ones. They are sometimes more intense or loaded than continental geographies. Mountains often embody the force and spirit of their initial formation, something still visible in their jagged peaks. They are the perfect location for finding life's deeper meaning, for they are often held sacred and associated with many superstitious beliefs. The Island of Memories is shaped by our stories and serves as a continuous collector of our digital data—images, texts, passwords, etc. A person's life is contained on a memory chip that is added to the top of the mountain. Through the addition of one chip after another, an archive is created through the construction of a sensitive portrait of a society in all its complex sociological, political and psychological manifestations. This accumulation of evidence—the stories of our lives—is methodically preserved in the infrastructure of the landscape, and it projects our images into the landscape. This is the collective memory of a world in search of a peaceful sanctuary.





# SYMTACTICS

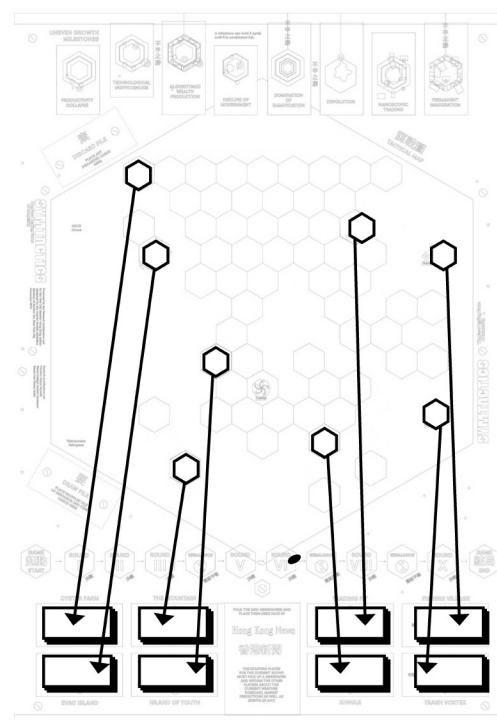
## Instructions

A simulation game of future tactical urbanism, set within a chaotic Hong Kong in the year 2047. For 3–6 players.

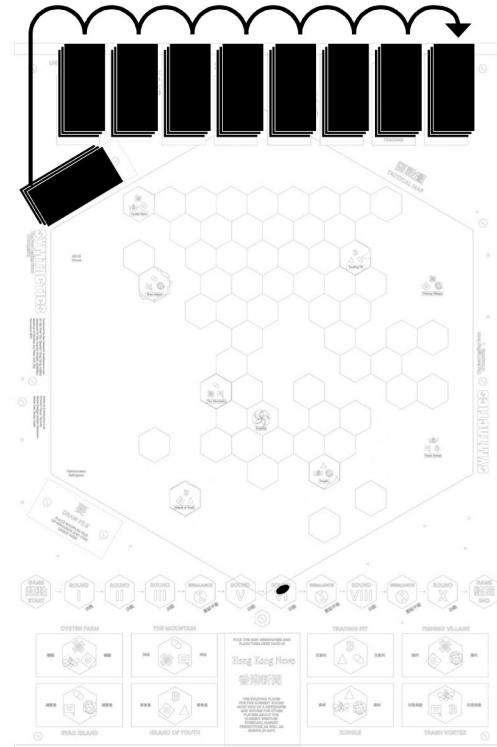
### OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

In 2047, Hong Kong is in the midst of ever-growing inequality. Players Travel, Fight, and spend Resources to complete Interventions (i.e. “build stuff”) at various sites across the geographic region of Hong Kong. A successful Intervention will help achieve a collective victory condition, counteract the effects of Uneven Growth Milestones, and double players’ Resources.

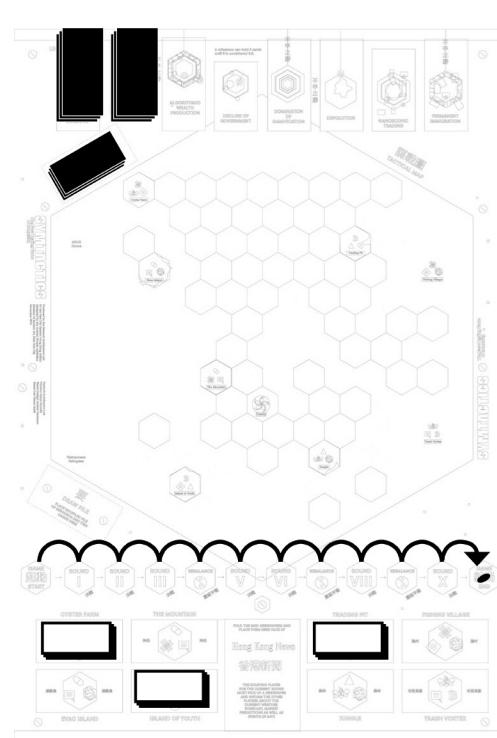
Events, which happen at the beginning of every round, force the players to continually shift their tactical decisions and strategic objectives. There are three outcomes to the game:



**COLLECTIVE WIN**  
When all 8 Interventions are completed before the Time Track reaches The End, all players win together.



**INDIVIDUAL WIN**  
When all 8 Uneven Growth Milestones have been reached before the Time Track reaches The End, the player with the most Resources in their hand wins.



**UNIVERSAL DEFEAT**  
When 10 rounds pass and the Time Track reaches The End before all interventions are completed or uneven growth milestones have been reached, all players lose.

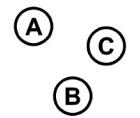
### 1. PREPARE GAMING ELEMENTS



1 six-sided die



1 small token for ASUS Drone, such as a piece of lint



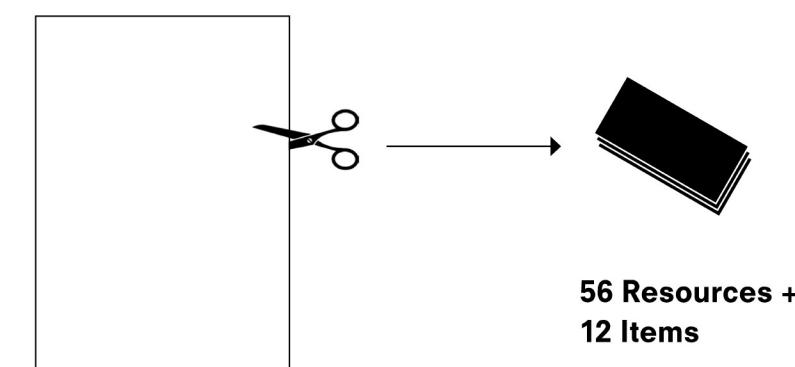
1 small token per player, such as a coin



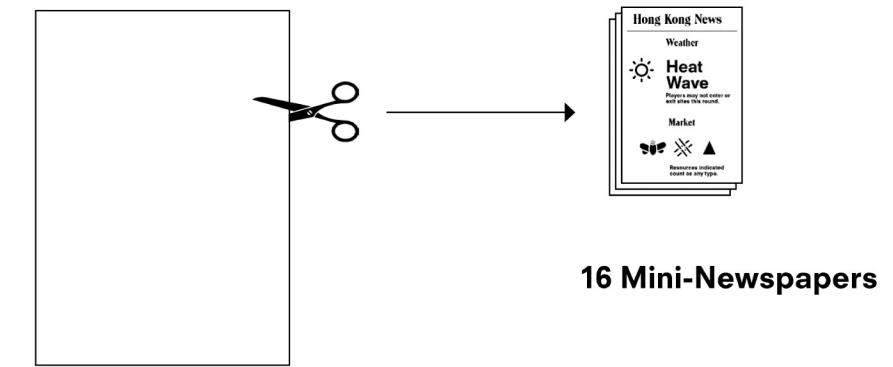
1 small token for Vietnamese Refugees, such as a bottle cap



1 grain of rice for Time Track Counter



Cut out Resources and Items and shuffle cards together

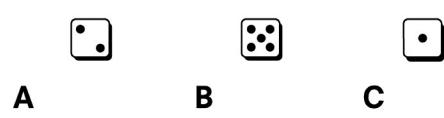


16 Mini-Newspapers

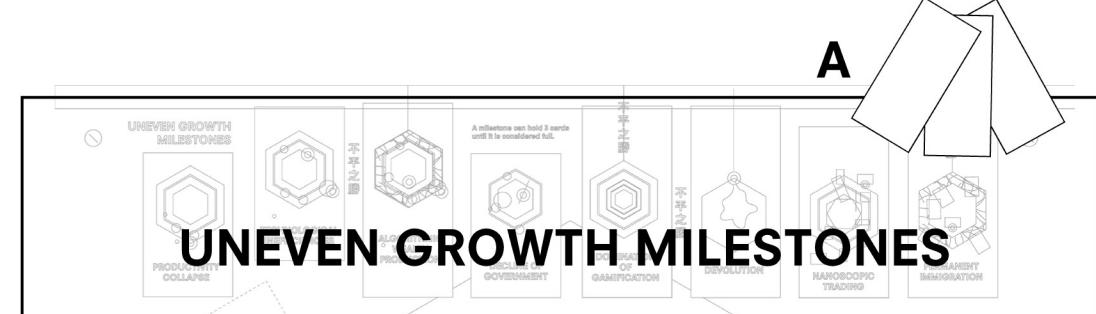
### 2. SET UP THE BOARD



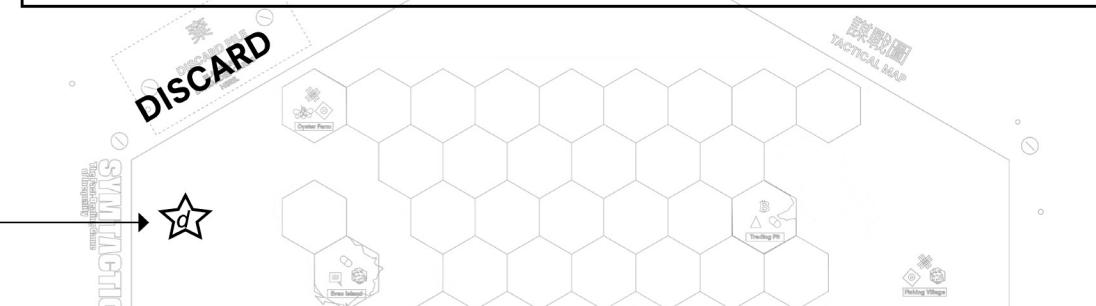
Deal 3 cards to every player



Players roll die to choose the starting player



Place ASUS Drone



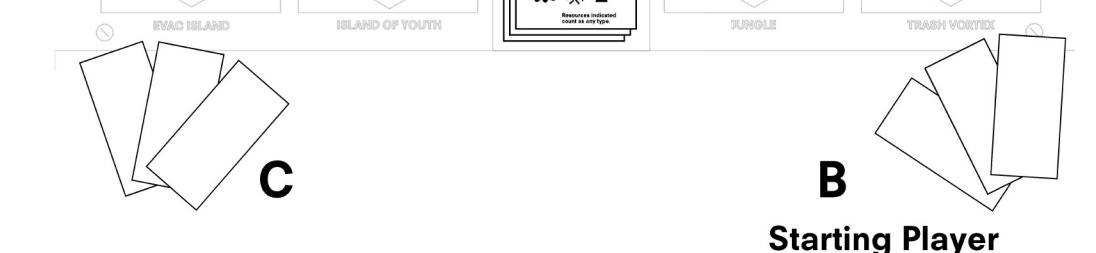
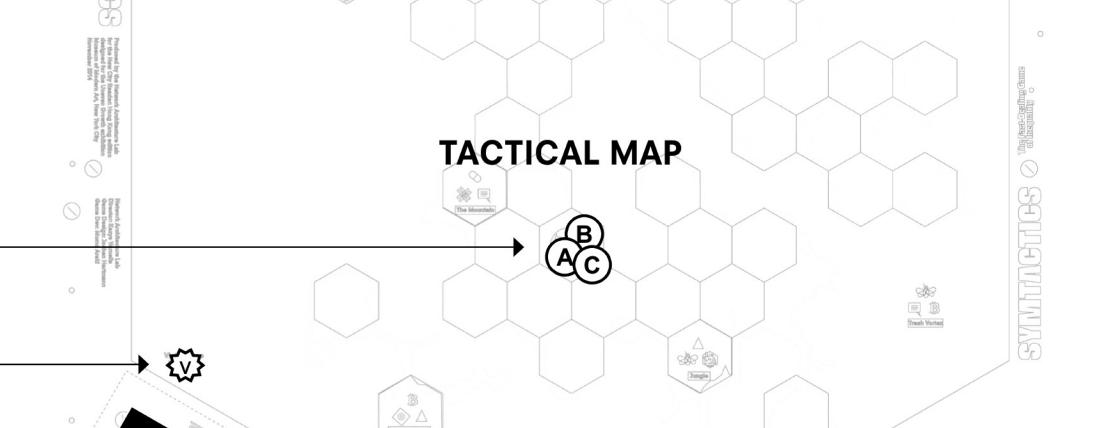
All player tokens start from Central hex in Hong Kong

Place Vietnamese Refugees

Place remaining stack of cards, face down, onto Draw Pile area

Place Counter onto Game Start along the Time Track

Place Mini-Newspapers face up onto area labeled ‘Hong Kong News’



B Starting Player

### 3. NOW START THE GAME

Moving in a clockwise fashion, players each take 1 turn per round, beginning with the Starting Player. During her turn, a player may perform all of the below actions once, in any order:

#### DRAW

Draw 1 card, if available from Draw Pile.

#### TRAVEL

Roll die. Look at the Weather Forecast and Travel up to the amount of the roll. If you enter a water hex, you must discard 1 Resource to continue.

#### FIGHT

You may attack any player in the same hex as you. Roll die to Fight.

If attacker's roll is greater than defender's roll, defending player must give 2 cards to the attacker and immediately return their token to Central hex to regroup. If attacker's roll is less than or equal to defender's roll, nothing happens.

#### TRADE

Players can Trade cards at any time. Trades are negotiable, so you might trade 1-for-1, 2-for-1, etc.

#### INTERVENE

When you reach a site hex, you may stop there to perform an Intervention. Look at the Market to see what Resources are 'wild' and can stand for any other Resource for the duration of the round. Pay the 3 Resources from your hand that match the site's 3 icons and place them face-up on the bottom of the game board where noted. Draw 6 cards from the Draw Pile.

You may also take a few moments to explain your Intervention to the other players and how it utilizes the required Resources to create a better urban condition at your site. If at least two of the other players agree that your description is compelling, you may Draw another card. You may not Travel further upon completing an Intervention.

#### DRAIN / DEVELOP

If you're at a site with an Intervention, you can Drain it by taking the Resources from the bottom of the board. Further, you could Develop the site by reinvesting the drained Resources to draw 6 new cards from the Draw Pile.

**ASUS Drone:** If you roll a 6 to Travel or during a Fight, you gain control of the ASUS Drone. The Drone immediately teleports into your current hex. Traveling on water does not affect its range.

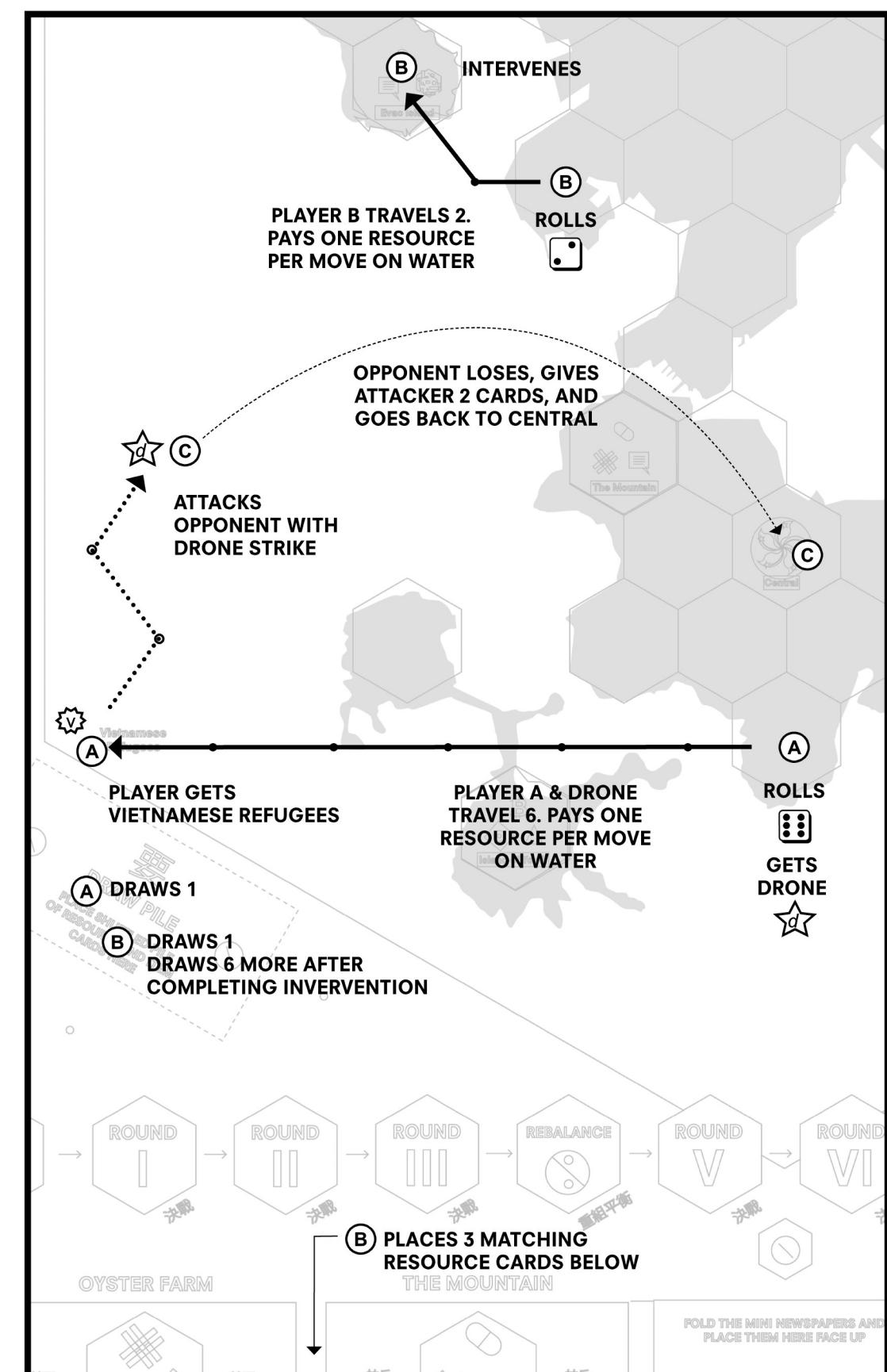
In addition to whatever actions you as a player choose to perform, you may perform one of the following Drone actions:

**DRONE STRIKE:** Attack another player up to a range of 3 hexes from you.

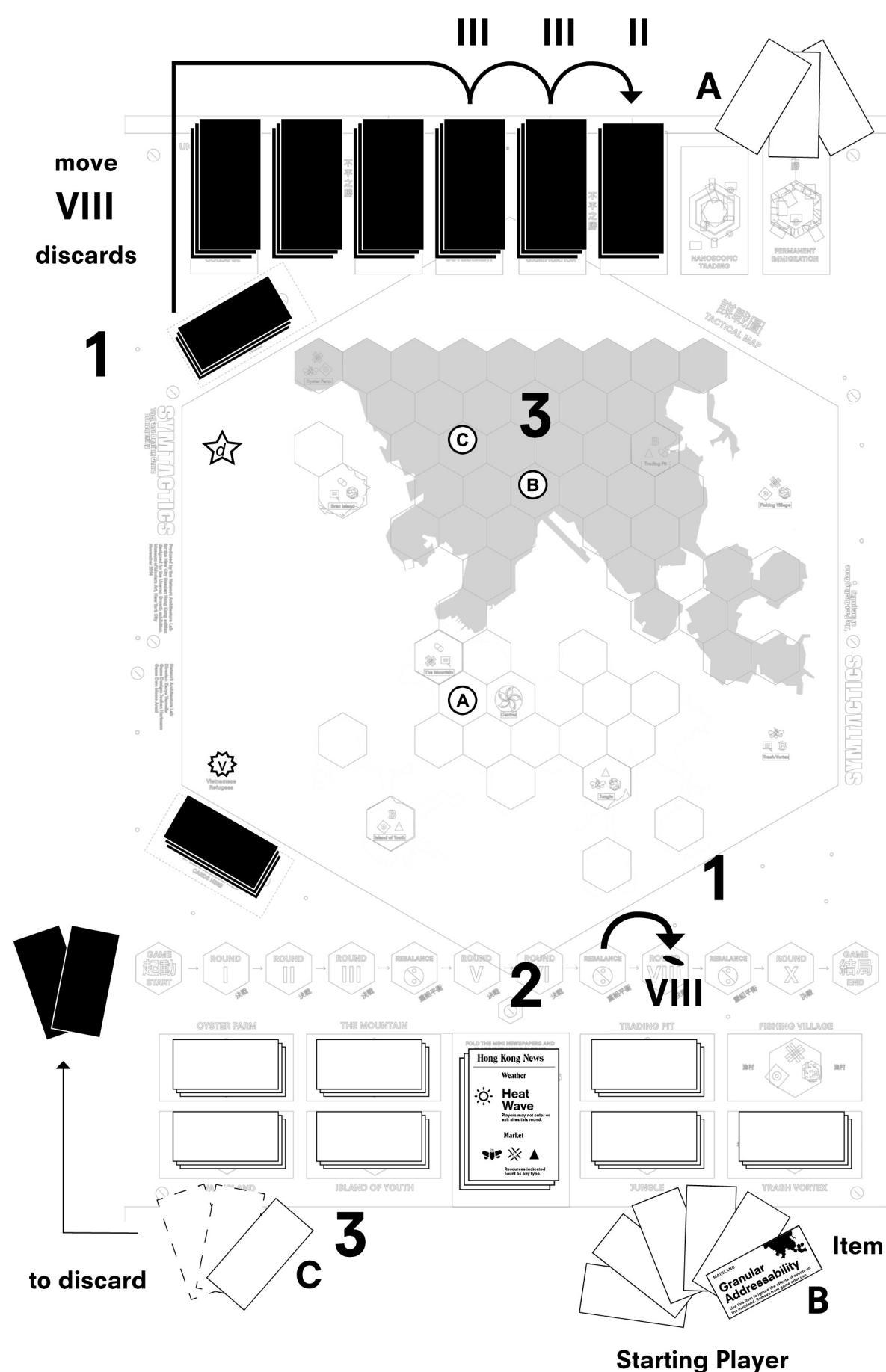
**DRONE RIDE:** Use the Drone to teleport you to any hex within a range of 3 from your current position.

**DRONE INTERVENTION:** Use the Drone to Intervene, to Drain or to Redevelop any site within a range of 3. Note that you must still possess the required Resources to do this.

#### Tactical Examples



### 4. MOVE TO THE NEXT ROUND AFTER ALL PLAYERS TAKE A TURN

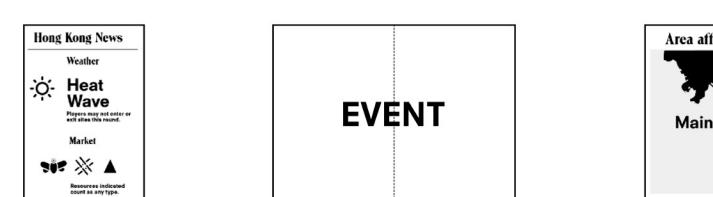


The Starting Player is responsible for moving the Time Track Counter forward every round.

#### IN A ROUND

##### 1

Transfer the number of cards from the Discard Pile to the Uneven Growth Milestones equal to the current round (as indicated in roman numerals on the Time Track). Each Milestone can hold 3 discarded cards before the next slot starts filling up.



##### 2

Read the Mini-Newspaper on the top of the pile. The Weather Forecast and Market affect all players' ability to Travel and spend Resources during this round. The Event is a chaotic global condition that will last for the duration of the entire round. The back page tells you what areas are affected by the Event.

##### 3

Any player in the affected area must discard 2 Resource cards and place them into the Discard Pile. If a player has an Item corresponding to the Affected Area, she may use it to protect herself from the Event. Remove used Items from the game. Remove the Mini-Newspaper at the end of the round.

#### IN A REBALANCE

First, compare the number of Interventions to the completed Uneven Growth Milestones. Only Interventions and Milestones with 3 cards are complete.

If Interventions are greater than or equal to Milestones, all players forfeit their hands and return the cards to the Draw Pile. 3 new cards are dealt to each player.

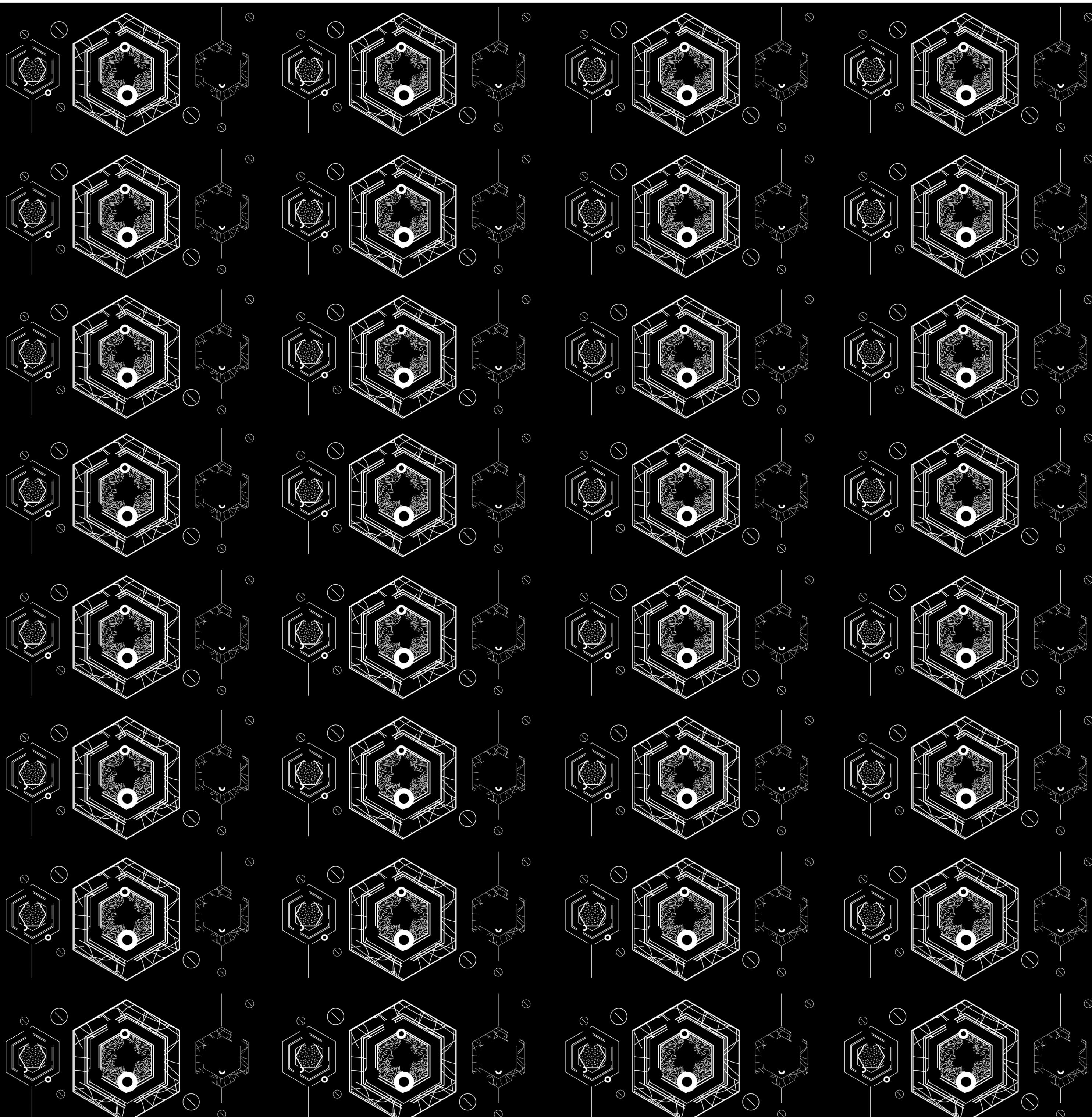
If Interventions are fewer than Milestones, the player with the most Resource cards takes 2 turns this round and controls the Drone for both turns.

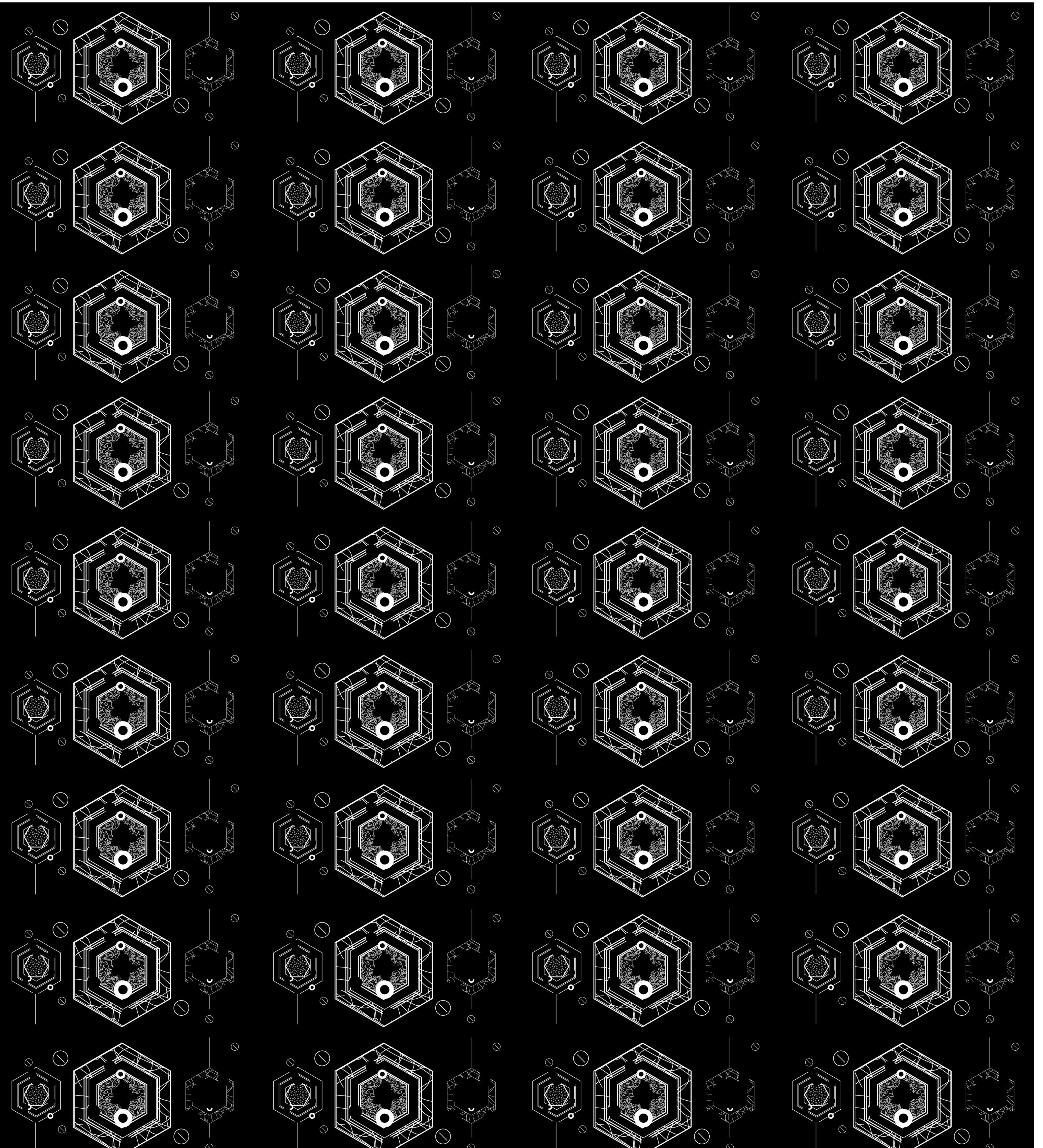
Next, follow same steps 1–3 in a Round.



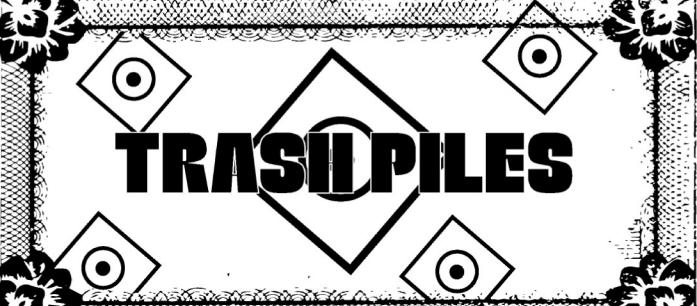
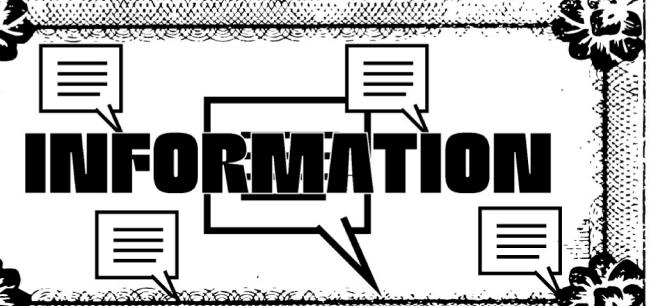
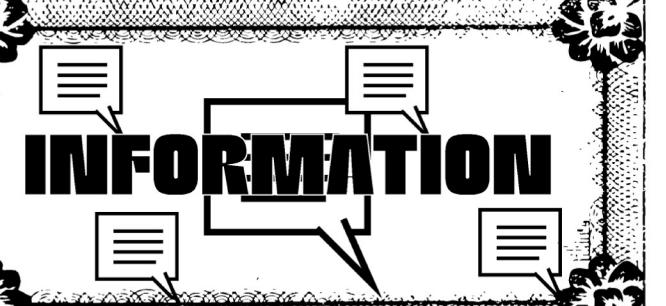
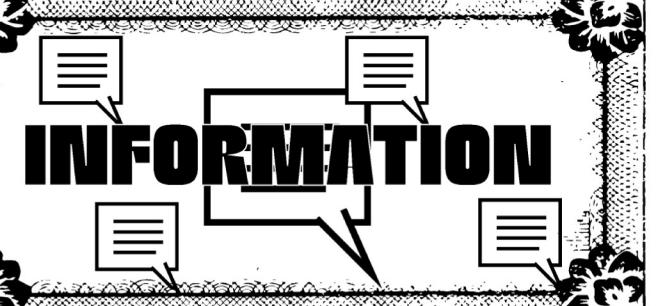
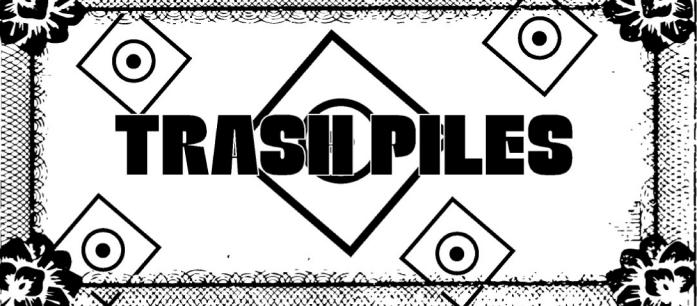
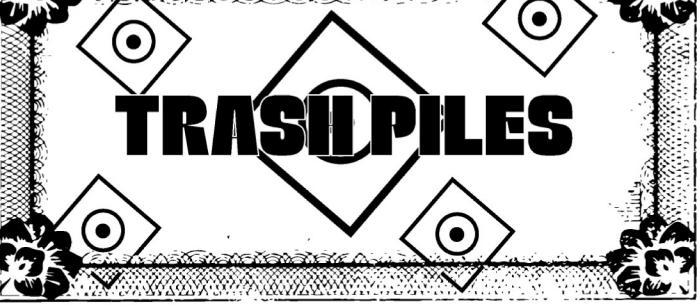
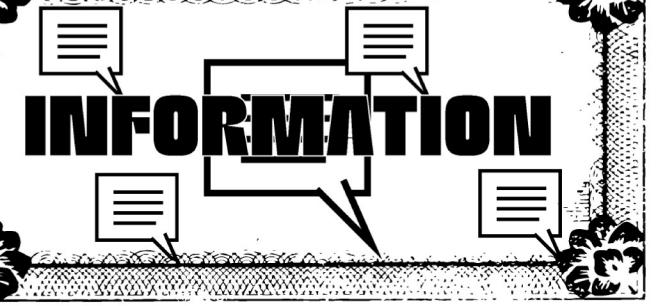
Go to this hex to rescue the Vietnamese Refugees. Put the token in your hand. You may choose to reset all cards in the Discard Pile and move them back to the Draw Pile during any Rebalance. You can also hold them hostage.

Area affected		Hong Kong News 香港新聞		Area affected		Hong Kong News 香港新聞		Area affected		Hong Kong News 香港新聞	
Islands	Weather	Heavy Rain	All players must travel at 1/2 of their normal speed.	Mainland	Weather	Heavy Rain	All players must travel at 1/2 of their normal speed.	Mainland	Weather	Heavy Rain	All players may travel twice in a row.
Islands	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.
Ocean	Weather	Clear	Travel normally.	Mainland	Weather	Clear	Travel normally.	Islands	Weather	Heat Wave	Players may not enter or exit sites this round.
Ocean	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.
Mainland	Weather	Polluted Wind	All players must pay 2 resources if they wish to travel this round.	Mainland	Weather	Polluted Wind	All players must pay 2 resources if they wish to travel this round.	Mainland	Weather	Heavy Rain	All players must travel at 1/2 of their normal speed.
Mainland	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.
Ocean	Weather	Heat Wave	Players may not enter or exit sites this round.	Mainland	Weather	Heat Wave	Players may not enter or exit sites this round.	Mainland	Weather	Heat Wave	Players may not enter or exit sites this round.
Ocean	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.	Hong Kong	Market	฿ ▲ ☰	Resources indicated count as any type.







**UPLOADS****TRASH PILES****INSECT SPECIES****INFORMATION****UPLOADS****TRASH PILES****INSECT SPECIES****INFORMATION****UPLOADS****TRASH PILES****INSECT SPECIES****INFORMATION****UPLOADS****TRASH PILES****INSECT SPECIES****INFORMATION****UPLOADS****TRASH PILES****INSECT SPECIES****INFORMATION****UPLOADS****TRASH PILES****INSECT SPECIES****INFORMATION****UPLOADS****TRASH PILES****INSECT SPECIES****INFORMATION**

HONG KONG

**Minecraft™  
Portscan**

OCEAN

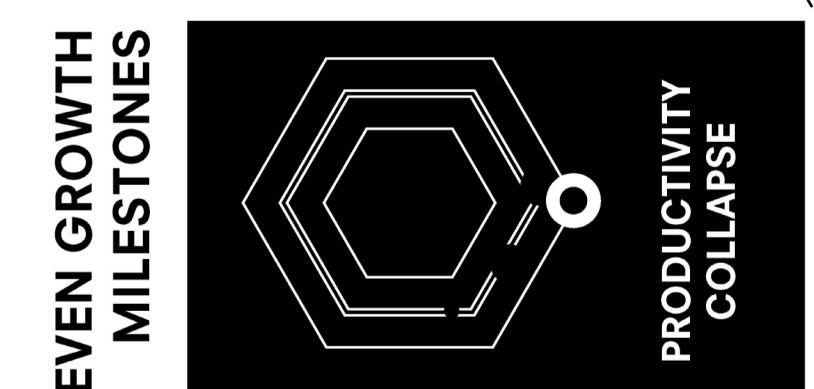
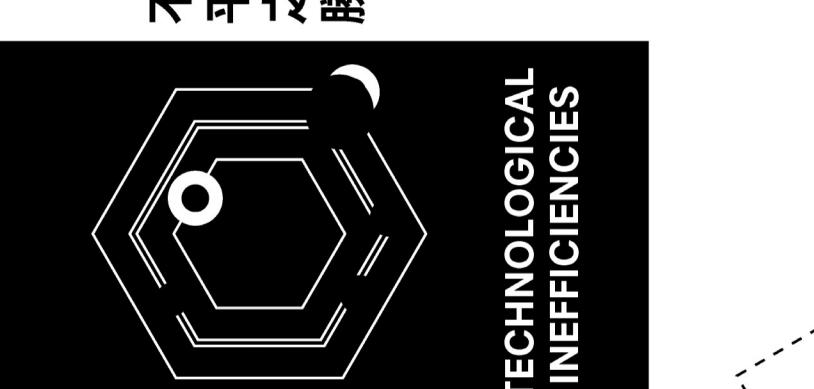
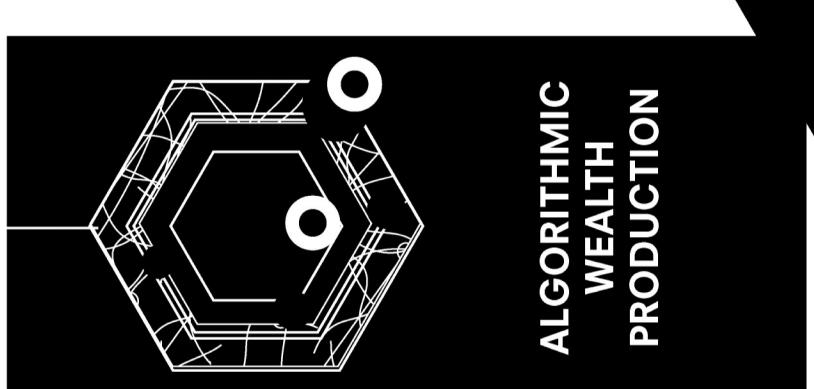
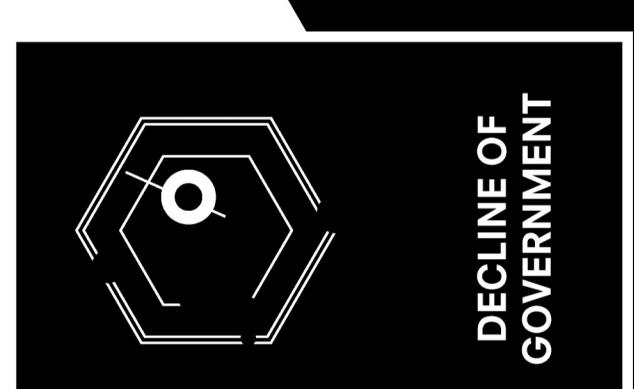
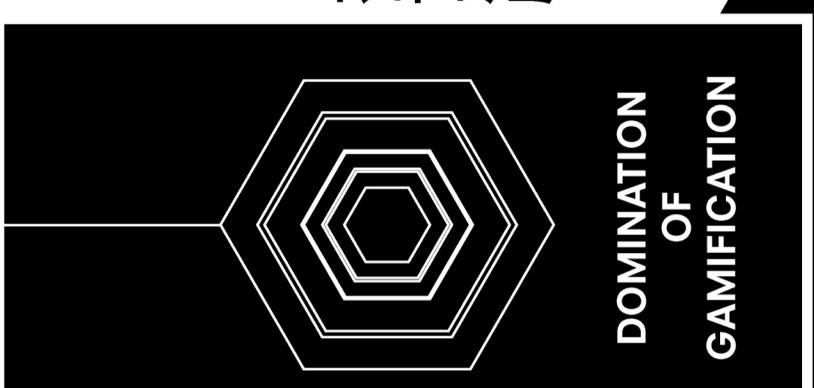
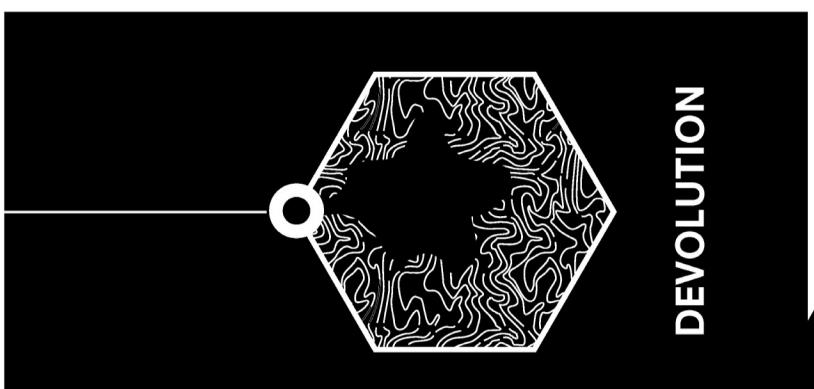
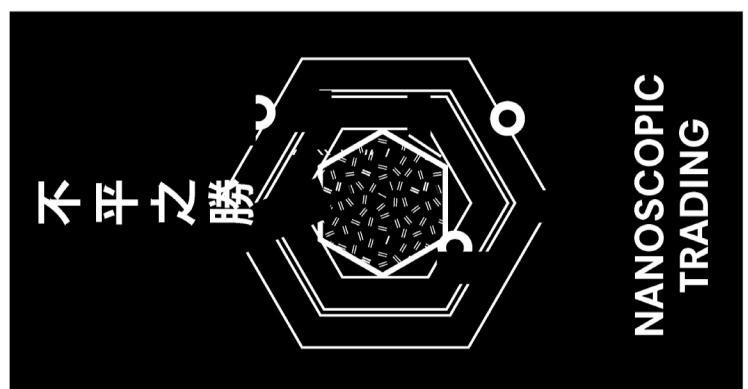
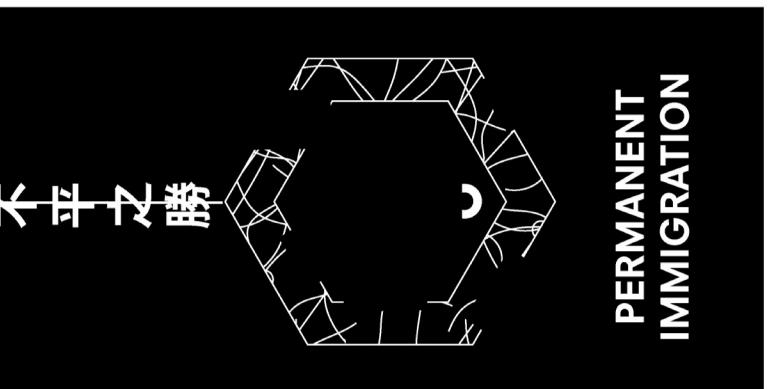
**Fish Sauce  
UX**Use this item to ignore the effects of events on  
in Hong Kong. Remove from game after use.

HONG KONG

**Ancient  
AndroidWear™**

HONG KONG

**Augmented  
Foam**Use this item to ignore the effects of events in  
Hong Kong. Remove from game after use.



謀略圖  
TACTICAL MAP

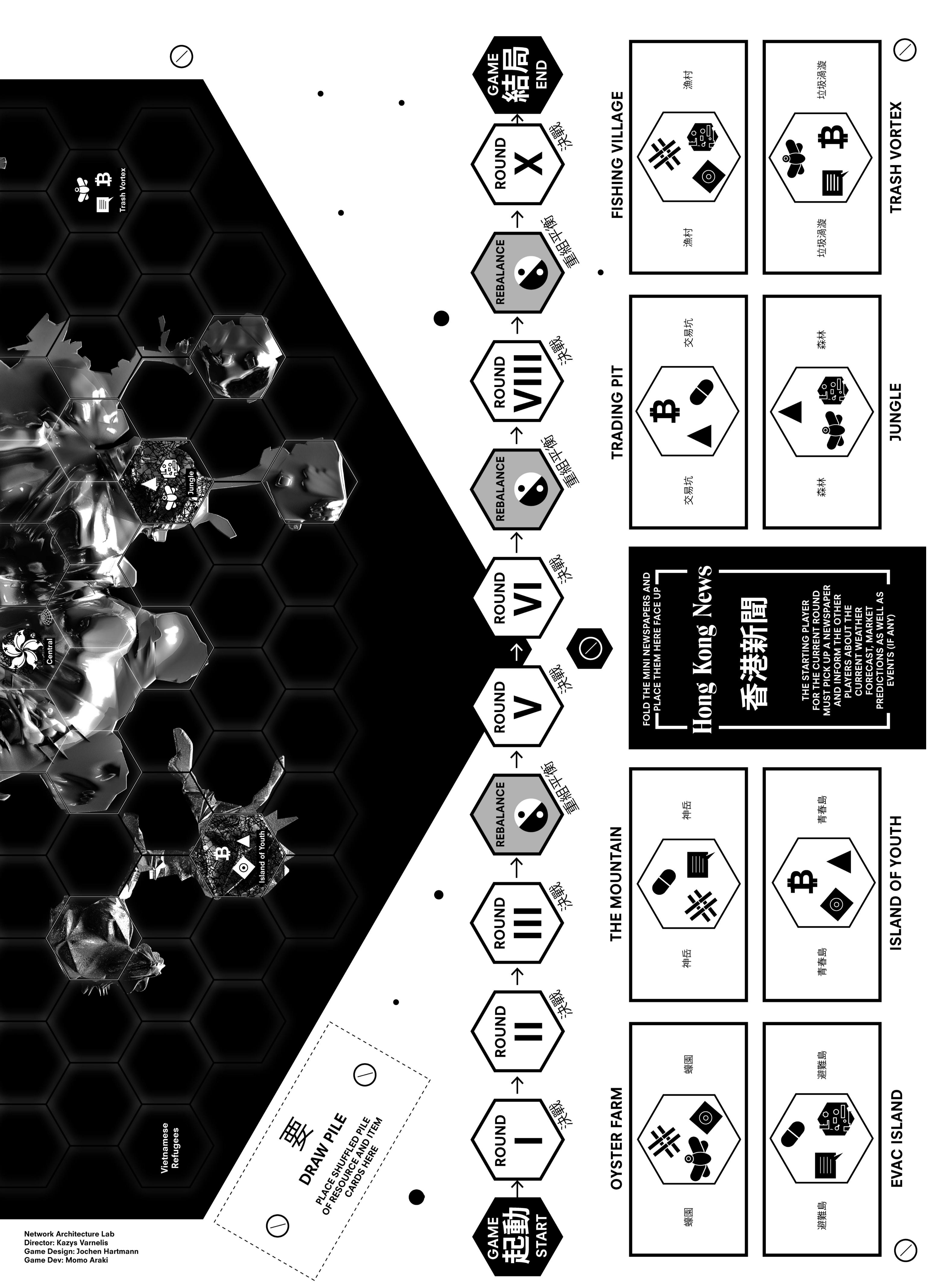
# SYMTACTICS

The Fast-Dealing Game  
of Inequality

Produced by the Network Architecture Lab  
for the New City Reader: Hong Kong edition  
designed for the Uneven Growth exhibition  
Museum of Modern Art, New York City  
November 2014

A milestone can hold 3 cards  
until it is considered full.

棄  
DISCARD PILE  
PLACE ANY CARDS  
PLACED  
HERE  
DISCARD



# H K 2 O O 0 N N 4 G G 7

by Kazys Varnelis; images by Jochen Hartmann

"The liberal reward of labour, therefore, as it is the necessary effect, so it is the natural symptom of increasing national wealth. The scanty maintenance of the labouring poor, on the other hand, is the natural symptom that things are at a stand, and their starving condition that they are going fast backwards."

--Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776)<sup>1</sup>

The tensions embodied between mainland and city in the Umbrella Revolution of 2014 are unlikely to abate soon. Rather, we anticipate that in future years this sort of conflict is only going to increase and spread due to changing social conditions. To illustrate, we turn to the year 2047, when the "One Country, Two Systems," doctrine that began in 1997 as the former British colony was handed over to the People's Republic of China is scheduled to run out, causing the city to lose its status as an exceptional zone within China. We hypothesize that instead of Hong Kong disappearing, China will disappear.

Demographic projections show that the People's Republic of China (PRC) faces a brick wall created by the one-child policy. The demographic dividend produced by the country's large ratio of effective producers (working age adults) to effective consumers (children and the elderly) was a critical factor in the country's growth to date. In 2013, however, a turning point was reached and the dividend's growth reversed, with China now producing more effective consumers than producers.<sup>2</sup> Within five years, yearly declines in the numbers of new workers fresh from school will become normal in China. Between 2016 and 2026 the population of workers aged 20 to 29 will drop by one quarter. In 2026 the population will peak and by mid-century, 30% of Chinese citizens will be over 60.<sup>3</sup> Without young workers dreaming of a better future, productivity will erode and eventually collapse. The result will be a suddenly poor country with a population of aging, bitter unwed men, lacking sufficient pensions, welfare, or other means of supporting themselves.

China's demographic crisis will parallel the condition of the vast majority of the world's developed countries in which population growth has long passed the tipping point. At mid-century, Japan, the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the United States will join China to endure major population declines as both poor and rich avoid having too many children. Even extreme government measures, such as Vladimir Putin's 2006 attempt to offer 250,000 rubles (about \$9,200 US) to women who would have a second child, will fail to change demographic destiny. Only the southern hemisphere will continue to grow, for a time at least. This will upend the status quo as to date the seeming inevitability of population growth means that our economies rely on it; but as populations decline, economies do as well.<sup>4</sup>

For China, the result will be a catastrophic reversal of course. Most developed countries have pension and social welfare systems in place for retirees, but China has done little in this regard. The loss of hundreds of millions of able-bodied workers will cause massive difficulty for China's factories. During the first decades of the twenty-first century, China built numerous new cities and hastily filled them with housing, factories, and starchitecture. Lacking the cheap labor that led to their rapid growth and faced with unsustainable infrastructural needs, these cities will empty, Sohos becoming new Detroits. The countryside, already experiencing major demographic pressure from migration as the disparity between rural and urban life grows, will face growing hardship, turning into a place of refuge for the elderly surviving on subsistence farming, much as in parts of Russia today. In contrast, even with dwindling population rates, key coastal cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Nanjing, having demanded Hong Kong-style autonomy from the diminished central government, will continue



Tai-O Megalith

to thrive as active players in an emerging global network of city-states.

The emergence of the Chinese coastal cities will accompany the decline of the central government. The result will be the PRC's devolution into a loose agglomeration of regional states, roughly akin to the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>5</sup> As countries have come closer together with globalization, they have also drifted apart internally and devolutionary movements have risen. Such movements result in considerable increases in political autonomy for specific territories even though they do not necessarily mean changes in the borders of nation-states (for example, Wales and Scotland in the UK or the Basque country and Catalonia in Spain).<sup>6</sup> The PRC has already

## We hypothesize that instead of Hong Kong disappearing, China will disappear.

introduced greater economic autonomy for its provinces and cities as a means of spurring economic productivity, although it has thus far resisted greater political autonomy, with Hong Kong and Macau being the exceptions. Nevertheless, China is a large and diverse country, and political forces in certain regions—most notably Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia—have called for greater autonomy or outright secession. For now, the government has maintained a hard line, issuing repressive crackdowns against such movements, but this sort of response has historically been proven to only fan the flames of separatist movements. With the coming demographic decline, the central state's economic and military power will weaken. Unless carefully managed, political devolution will cause a significant loss of face for the PRC. The Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan, with whom China has recently begun high level diplomatic talks, is a key player in solving this problem. Although the island has increasingly proclaimed its own identity as a culture indepen-

dent of China, such an autonomous position paradoxically offers a transition out of the dilemma posed by the ROC's earlier claims to be the real government of mainland China. At present, Taiwan remains an international outcast needing to defend itself from the potential military threat the PRC poses. The reality is that lacking political recognition and facing barriers to international trade, Taiwan is increasingly dependent on China, already its top trade partner.<sup>7</sup> The result is a de facto "one country, two systems" condition, lacking only a formal agreement to that effect.<sup>8</sup> For the PRC, integrating Taiwan will remove any threat of United States military action against China while stimulating popular sentiment during a time of increasing sociopolitical weakness. Within the paradoxical logic of 21st century devolution, an expanded China will go hand in hand with devolution, thus finding ways of avoiding loss of face while pacifying more difficult provinces.

Nor will this just be a way of appeasing dissident localities. With their international trading power, the coastal Chinese cities will increase their power against the center in the newly devolved China. Hong Kong's special status will spread, becoming a model in China. Moreover, it will also spur on megacities worldwide, which have become increasingly disconnected from the territories around them. In many cases these megacities will also advocate for special status within larger countries, demanding greater autonomy, both economically and in terms of foreign policy. These new city-states will band together ever more over time in economic cooperation agreements, leaving their nation-states behind.<sup>9</sup> As the crisis at home becomes apparent, it is further plausible that China will increase its efforts overseas even more substantially, going so far as to create extraterritorial city-states on the model of Hong Kong and Singapore as joint ventures in developing countries worldwide.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, the Chinese city-states will be challenged by demographic pressures as well, and Hong Kong is no exception. Since 2000, Hong Kong has had the distinction of being the country with the world's second lowest fertility rate, Macau having the lowest. This poses a significant threat to Hong Kong's economic future.<sup>11</sup> Underscoring the stall in internal population growth, a recent increase in emigration of educated individuals from Hong Kong means that between mid-2012 and mid-2013, the city had more migrants leaving than arriving.<sup>12</sup>



Mid-level Dronescape

With Hong Kong's history of accommodating migrants from both within China and outside it, the territory will be able to resume growth through migration from other countries in Southeast Asia as well as from Africa which is now becoming extensively colonized by Chinese capital. Notably, rising from its former status within the Commonwealth, Hong Kong has maintained continuing economic ties with India and will be able to draw on the Indian population for labor, unlike the rest of China. With its population bolstered by new migration and its continuing role in global finance and manufacturing ensured by its highly developed business networks and global outlook, Hong Kong remains an incredibly attractive location uniquely suited to lead the coastal city-states.<sup>13</sup>

The effect of bringing in more migrant workers will produce even more inequality in Hong Kong, a stress point that has already grown almost insurmountable. As measured by the GINI coefficient, Hong Kong has the highest income inequality of any developed city or country in the world (and likely higher still since wealthy families in China habitually underestimate their income) and that coefficient has trended inexorably higher over the last two decades.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it is unlikely that Hong Kong will deal with its own demographic crisis by allowing permanent immigration. Rather, the government will continue to expand the existing two-tier system, allowing poor immigrants to remain in the territory only on time-delimited visas while allowing the wealthy and skilled access to the system.

After the explosion of the demographic bomb, the world will face a new economic reality. Adam Smith observed that continuous economic growth has historically been predicated not only on growing technological efficiencies but also on an increase in both population and the amount of raw materials available. Should any of those three variables slow down, growth will cease. Under stagnant or falling populations, economies begin to contract, national wealth decreases and capitalism cannot be maintained. Smith himself never argued that growth in the West would be endlessly sustainable. On the contrary, he used China as an example of a country much the same as five hundred years beforehand when Marco Polo first wrote about it. China, he explained, is a stationary state, going neither forward nor backward, but rather had "acquired that full complement of riches which the nature of its laws and institutions permits it to acquire."<sup>15</sup> China's past, then, is the world's future.

The current economic crisis is a sign that capitalism may soon be in an inexorable slide. Starting in the late 1990s, declining profit margins and radical technological changes led economies and financial markets into a pattern of booms and busts.<sup>16</sup> Within the next decade, the world's financial elite turned away from traditional investments, toward increasingly complex and short-term ways to extract wealth such as high speed trading and quantitatively driven arbitrage so as to ensure that returns would continue regardless of the direction of the market.<sup>17</sup> As a hedge against the ever-present threat of currency collapses, the wealthy also turned to real estate in global cities, helping to drive prices skyward.

Booms and busts notwithstanding, these trends will continue. Capitalism itself will have long come to an end, victim to

declining resources and increasing levels of complexity, its highest levels being replaced by the algorithmic production of wealth wherever a loophole may still be found. While the system lurches along, global city cores will remain strong. Highly defended, with a huge population of surplus labor to draw on for services, these will continue to be attractive destinations for the elite to work and play in (although only within a geographically dispersed strategy of global hedging that will include idyllic, defended exurban ecotopias should the socioeconomic system thoroughly collapse). Most rural zones will remain sites of food production, by then highly automated while also being sites of subsistence farming and low-level employment for the elderly and impoverished: a landscape of giant agro-drones marching amidst a desperate elderly tenders.

With high finance essentially a game, everyday life for individuals worldwide follows suit. By 2047, with income disparity high and social mobility low, those unlucky enough to be in the top 1% have little opportunity to better their conditions. Instead, as they eke out a living, they occupy themselves in a world increasingly dominated by the logic of games such as lotteries and online gambling. The governments of megacity-states, burdened with debt and facing radically limited budgets, turn to tactical urbanism as the only possible way to make interventions in the city and to keep the populace away from the barricades.

1 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 73.

2 Feng Wang, "China's Population Destiny: The Looming Crisis," The Brookings Institution (September 2010), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2010/09/china-population-wang>

3 "China's Population to Peak at 1.4 Billion Around 2026," United States Census Bureau Newsroom (December 15, 2009), [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/international\\_population/cb09-191.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/international_population/cb09-191.html). Judith Banister, David E. Bloom, and Larry Rosenberg, "Population Aging and Economic Growth in China," Program on the Global Demography of Aging, [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/pgda/WorkingPapers/2010/PGDA\\_WP\\_53.pdf](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/pgda/WorkingPapers/2010/PGDA_WP_53.pdf), 8.

4 Cf. George Friedman, "Population, Crisis, and Culture Wars," *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century* (Random House LLC, 2009), 52-61.

5 See also Friedman, "China 2020," *The Next 100 Years*, 88-100.

6 Andrés Rodríguez-Pose and Nicholas Gill, "The Global Trend Towards Devolution and its

Implications," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 21(3) 333-351.

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